

The Player

a play for Sholtzpeare
by Sabina Piersol

Characters:

John, slovenly but still a heartbreaker
Rosie, sweet and mild-mannered
Tatiana, more of a firecracker
Jogger, in short shorts

Cast:

LJ
Sarah
Jessica
Andre

Falstaff_76 enters with a ratty backpack and slumps on a park bench, hungover and exhausted. Looks at his watch and realizes he needs to go. As he's getting up, Rosie and Tatiana enter behind him, jogging. He sees them and realizes there's no escape, so he lies down on the bench and pulls his hoodie over his head, hoping they don't notice him. They start doing cool-down stuff/partner stretching right in front of him. Rosie and Tatiana are real friends, but also both a little braggish and the slightest bit competitive.

During the dialogue between Rosie and Tatiana, John is listening and trying to play dead when they finally recognize him.

GIRLS RUN ACROSS THE STAGE, THEN AFTER 2 BEATS RUN BACK ACROSS AROUND THE BENCH TO STAGE LEFT DURING...

ROSIE

So my date DID go really well in a way.

TATIANA

In a way?

ROSIE

Well..I think he was super into me.

GIRLS ARRIVE AND STOP OUT OF BREATH, THE END OF A LONG JOG.

TATIANA

Oh. How'd you know? Was he trying to -- (*makes a vulgar gesture*)

ROSIE

(*annoyed*) No. He kept singing my praises. Literally.

TATIANA

Oh god, did he bust out a guitar? **STARTS TO STRETCH UP AND OVER, BUTTS IN JOHN'S' FACE.** That's so late 90's.

ROSIE

No, he kept complimenting me, but only...well, only in similes. And one extended metaphor comparing my calves to bananas that was actually really sweet.

TATIANA

Um, that's weird.

LYING DOWN, HEADS DS, LEGS OPEN IN WIDE V-STRETCH

ROSIE

I kinda liked it.

TATIANA

You know it's funny, John -- my new boyfriend -- rhymes a lot. And every now and then he'll say something slightly off -- like, "Tatiana, my feelings for you are really starting to *escalade*."

SITTING UP, GIRLS GO FOOT TO FOOT V STRETCH, HOLD HANDS AND STRETCH FORWARD AND BACK

ROSIE

Escalade...as in the car? Aww, that's so pathetic!

TATIANA

~~I know, right? He has no idea. (beat) I'll admit I sorta like being smarter than him. Makes it easier in a way, you know?~~

ROSIE

Oh, so my guy... in the middle of the date the guy says he has to leave (*doing air quotes*) "like a schoolboy bound for school with sullen looks." (beat) And he hasn't called me since.

BOTH GIRLS GROAN; TATIANA NOTICES JOHN FALLING BEHIND BENCH

TATIANA

That's odd.

ROSIE

I don't know. My therapist and I have been looking for a pattern to my dating so I can try to break it. But there's just no logic to it. There was that skinny broody guy...

TATIANA

Oh yeah, the singer-songwriter who only wrote about his mom? And murder? (beat) Wasn't he Scandinavian? **GIRLS GET UP STRETCH LEGS ON BACK OF BENCH.** So, even though last night John said he had an "antidote" to tell me about his dog --

ROSIE

(*shaking her head*) An 'antidote'? So sad. sad.

TATIANA

-- I finally slept with him anyway. I mean, I kept waiting for him to not be drunk, but THAT wasn't gonna happen...

(*noticing a figure huddled on the ground*) Oh god, somebody's right there!

ROSIE

Do you think he's okay?

TATIANA

Get...the fuck...UP, John.

ROSIE

(sudden recognition) John? *(confused by the name)* That's Falstaff underscore 76! Gianni! *(pronounced with slight Italian accent)* *(to him)* From last weekend?

JOHN

(still on the ground; announcing himself once he realizes he's been found) I AM the man.

John is trying to crawl (or stumble?) away but Tatiana stops him.

TATIANA

Seriously? *(to John as she stops him)* Oh no no no no. What is going on here? We JUST had the monogamy talk. And what the hell are you doing on the ground?

JOHN

(Stuck for the moment, John brushes himself off and begins, addressing both women at different times during speech)

I stand amazed and swear I jest at none
 When I do say that you might be the one
 In glimm'ring spandex you do squeeze my heart
 From where it rests between this and that part. *(gesturing to each thigh)*
 Each night I play my dulcet tones anew
 On babes who in my hairy ears will mew
 "Sweet John, how I adore thy clever rhymes
 Oh how I long for one more lullaby."
 And with that, ladies, I bid you adieu -- *(kissing Tatiana's hand)*

TATIANA

So *this* is the sick aunt you had to bring homemade risotto to last weekend? *(gesturing to Rosie; still blocking John's exit)*

JOHN

No, 'twas not homemade. If we be together, ladies, then shall we be merry? My hollowed gourd doth burst with sweet libation... *(reaching*

down the front of his pants for a flask, retrieves it, and offers it to them) Shall we have a play extempore?

ROSIE

Sure. I'll play the ingenue who falls for your overblown flattery.

TATIANA

And I'll play the top to your saggy bottom. *(beat)* This is what I get for my patience?

JOHN

We have our roles and a play toward! And I'll play the knave. *(beat)* Could you two be dears and get me a refill? *(shaking the flask)*

ROSIE

So this is your thing? You just 'Shakespeare out' on women and think that excuses how you act? *(pause)* Oh fuck, I only date Shakespeare characters.

JOHN

Even the worst acting needs no excuse when all are entertained.

TATIANA

He's living the cliché of getting to have your cake and eat it too.

JOHN

No, I just want to eat cake, period. And every kind of cupcake...especially those tiny little s'mores cupcakes. *(beat)* No guilt! It's never served anybody.

ROSIE

(still hurt) And being completely self-centered is why you'll always be alone. *(to Tatiana)* Let's go, I'm getting cold. *(R & T begin to exit. John now feels the need to defend his position, and he's also a little sad they're going away...)*

JOHN

Young -- Rosalind, or is it Rosalind? *(said with two different pronunciations)* -- I am alone, and therefore never without company. Why? Because I know something no man will admit but all men know:

that one day I, too, will be separated from all that I love. (*Kisses each of their hands with tenderness before continuing*)

Am I an honorable man? No. And so I need not live up to that monstrous statue, that pillar of goodness that falls upon men and crushes them. I play dead to stay alive. I leave the 'good men' to pose in their family portraits whilst I pitch my tent where'er I please. (*with a bit of wistful sadness*) This tattered prodigal is living large. And putting his English degree to pretty good use. (*beat*) Remember, my loves, there is great freedom in futility. (*bows deeply*) So if you'll excuse me...(*Trails off as he exits. Both women plop on the bench, looking after him with astonishment and vague longing.*)

ROSIE

I'm amazed.

TATIANA

And know notwhat to say.

Enter a hot young jogger, singing to self.

JOGGER

We are young / Heartache to heartache we stand / No promises, no demands / Love is a battlefield...oh hey ladies! (*takes out earbuds*) That's embarrassing. Do you mind if I join you?(*starts doing lunges*)

ROSIE

(*aside to Tatiana, who is clearly interested in him*) Um, really?

TATIANA

(*to jogger*) Of course not. Don't be embarrassed, we love that song. Can you turn it up, actually?

JOGGER

(*from shy to a big smile*) Sure. (*he puts his iphone on the bench and cranks volume; they do lunges together*)

Fade in "Love Is A Battlefield"; lights fade

FINIS